

CGO tells Air Force story through his artwork

1st Lt. Darrick Lee
90th Space Wing Public Affairs

Before the age of cameras and digital imagery, military artists provided the only visual images of war. Much like the news correspondents of today, military artists were embedded with armies to show the rest of the world a glimpse of our military in action.

Capt. Warren Neary, 90th Space Wing Public Affairs chief, has placed himself in the company of military artists like Emmanuel Leutze, who painted “Washington Crossing the Delaware.” Capt. Neary was selected in 2004 to create works of art along with five other artists to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Air Force Space and Missiles. He not only proved that the pen is mightier than the sword, but also the paintbrush can pack a mean punch, too. His work was displayed during the Air Force Art Program’s 2004 art presentation Oct. 29 at Andrews Air Force Base. Most recently, his work was unveiled along with five other artists at the Air Force Ball in Los Angeles, Calif., Nov. 19.

More than 200 pieces of art were displayed at Andrews, six of which commemorated the 50th Anniversary of Air Force Space and Missiles. This art is donated to the Air Force as gifts to the government, and line the halls of various government buildings including the Pentagon. Out of the 200, Capt. Neary’s painting was the only piece displayed that represented the Peacekeeper Intercontinental Ballistic Missile mission of the Air Force.

Capt. Neary is one of only three uniform-wearing artists out of 150 actively participating in the Air Force Art program. His most recent work is a montage depicting various Airmen performing jobs unique to our Peacekeeper mission. With the deactivation of the Peacekeeper in September 2005, his work is one of the few ICBM paintings in the Air Force art collection.

The painting, which the officer titles “Mission Complete,” is not his first oil painting. His first painting selected to join the Air Force art collection, titled “White-man’s Legacy,” depicted the various aircraft and missile systems that operated there. He gained more recognition within the military art community for his work entitled “Faces of Freedom,” which displays images from Joint Task Force GTMO, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and the joint efforts of servicemembers who are responsible for detaining and interrogating enemy combatants during Operation Enduring Freedom. This painting was accepted into the U.S. Army Center for Military History art collection in 2003.

Capt. Neary, who wrote and illustrated his first book when he was in second grade, was born

in Oklahoma City, Okla. He attended high school in Cache Valley, Utah, and was commissioned as a second lieutenant after completing an ROTC on a scholarship at Utah State University in 1998. He earned a bachelor’s degree, majoring in fine art.

Although dedicated to serving as an officer, Captain Neary never lost his desire to paint. During his first years in the Air Force, Neary served as a communications officer before cross-training into public affairs. He distinguished himself amongst his peers, being selected as the Air Force 2004 Public Affairs Wing-Level Company Grade Officer of the year. As his military accomplishments have grown, he’s found it more challenging to devote time to his art.

However, at a recent Public Affairs conference, Air Force Space Command announced their invitation to Air Force artists to create artwork to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Air Force Space and Missiles. Capt. Neary was asked to join them since he was an existing member of the art program. This gave him a new opportunity to help showcase space and missile contributions.

When asked to describe his feelings when painting, he’s quick to squash existing stereotypes.

“A false perception is that painting is a relaxing, freethinking act that flows from your fingers as you stand in front of a canvas,” the artist said.

“Actually, it requires a lot of hard work in mental thought, drafting and measuring to create a worthwhile piece. A painting is like a play. An artist must predetermine who the soloist will be, and how the supporting cast will support without drawing the viewers attention away from the main subject. He must think about drawing, edges, color, lights and darks, and design before and throughout the painting process.”

When attempting to create a painting for the anniversary, he decided on a painting that showcased Airmen supporting the Peacekeeper mission.

“A lot of people only think about the missile system. But it’s the Airmen of all ranks who perform vital work to keep our ICBM’s safe, secure and ready to provide deterrence and top-cover for our deployed servicemembers abroad.” Captain Neary said.

“I wanted to show that it’s the people that matter, more than the technology or the system,” he added.

By painting art that shows a Warren missileer on alert, a chef cooking, maintainers fixing missiles, security forces protecting, helicopter pilots escorting, and a facility manager inspecting, Neary has effectively ensured them a place in history, along with the Peacekeeper missile itself.

“I’m fortunate as a PA (officer.) I



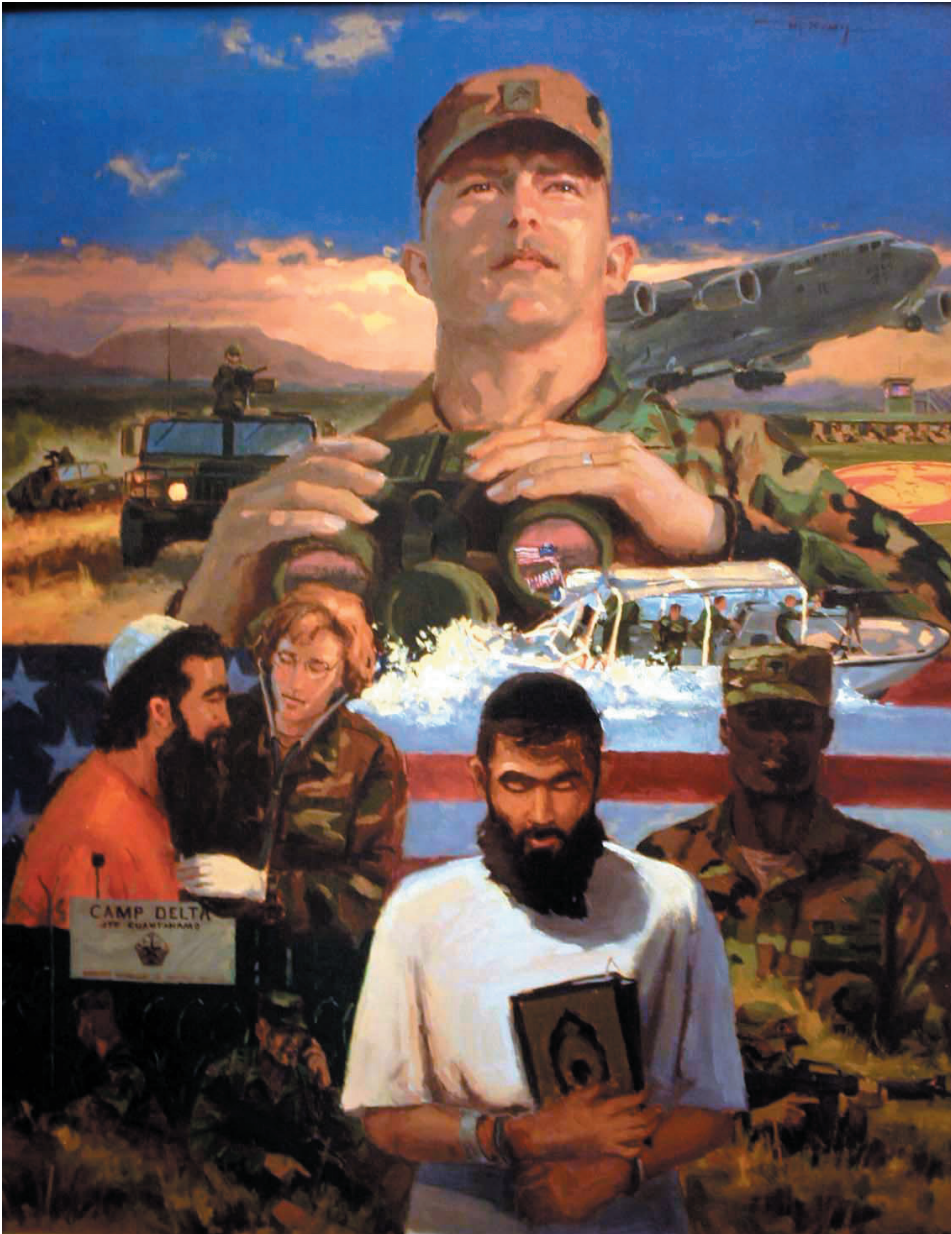
"Mission Complete," painted by Capt. Warren Neary, 90th Space Wing Public Affairs chief, depicts various Airmen performing jobs unique to our Peacekeeper mission. Captain Neary is a member of the Air Force Art Program.

have the opportunity to tell the Air Force story through broadcast and print media,” Capt. Neary said. “But in addition, I can tell the Air Force story through paint and my artwork. It’s a real pleasure.”

The Air Force Art program and collection is the responsibility of the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force. Originating in 1950 with a collection of more than 800 pieces of art documenting the Army Air Corps, it now

serves to document Air Force history. You can learn more about the program by visiting their Web

site: <http://www.afapo.hq.af.mil/presentation/Content/aboutArt.cfm>.



Capt. Warren Neary, 90th Space Wing Public Affairs chief, painted "Faces of Freedom" which displays images from Joint Task Force GTMO, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The painting was accepted into the U.S. Army Center for Military History art collection in 2003.



Photo by 1st Lt. Darrick Lee

Capt. Warren Neary puts the finishing touches on a painting in his home. The 90th Space Wing Public Affairs chief is one of three uniform wearing artists in the Air Force Art Program.